



Bruno Shotas, a tireless worker who chairmanned the successful Lithuanian folk dance festival. He is one of the Ateitis organizers and its president during a number years. (Foto Ernest Studio)

LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

Chicago's tremendous Amphitheatre in the Stockyards was the scene of the historic and first Lithuanian Folk Dance festival. 700 folk dancers from United States and Canada demonstrated, 20,000 witnessed the event. The Mayor of Chicago proclaimed June 30, Lithuanian Folk Dance Day. President Eisenhower, Cardinal Stritch and other dignitaries sent greetings. It was a fabulous spectacle of mass dancing and beautiful costumes. The press responded glowingly with praise. It was truly a memorable event unequalled by any other in greater color and perfection.

The festival preceded with Masses and services in the Catholic and Evangelical churches. The program started with marches of massed flags, American, Canadian and Lithuanian National Anthems and speeches by dignitaries. The multitude of dancers entered with Suktinis and followed up with Kubilas, Kalvelis, Čigonėlis, Mikita, Kepurinė, Vėdaras, Šustas and Letunas. Then entered a group of school children from Lithuanian parochial schools who sang many folk songs, played airs on the kanklės (national stringed instrument) and performed singing party-game dances.

After the intermission the dancers performed Sukčius, Jonkelis, Senio Polka Sadutė, Ožlis, Blezdینگėlė, Rugučiai, Malunas, and closed with Noriu Miego (I'm sleepy), a popular Lith. ball room type of folk dance. Again, with much ritual, retiring of flags and orchestral send off the colorful evening ended.



A part of the 700 dancers from all over the U. S. and Canada who participated in the All-Lithuanian folk dance festival in Chicago. On the same program also appeared about 500 parochial school children who performed play party dances, and a number of choruses. (Foto Courtesy Sun-Times, Chicago).

The tireless chairman of this big event was Bruno Shotas, leader of the Ateitis group, who was assisted by an excellent committee of inspired enthusiasts. Mrs. Josephine Daužvardis is one of the many who should be singled out for selfless help contributed (and of course the "little woman", Lucille Shotas, ever present to urge on). A "VALIO!" to everyone who was involved in any manner in this successful event.

There was but one criticism anent this festival which may also hold true for all folk dance groups everywhere, as the tendency is universal. Some of the participating groups appeared all dressed in their fineries (men, that is), but wore ordinary shirts with sleeves rolled up, which was completely out of keeping with the joyous, dressed up occasion. I'm mentioning this not in order to "throw a wet blanket" at this most successful and splendid affair but to plead with all folk dance group to avoid and eliminate this trend which is almost becoming national with some groups, such as Mallorcans, etc. Rolled up shirt sleeves indicate toil and labor, not festivity.

It is hoped that these huge ethnic festivals will become an annual event. VILTIS once again extends felicitations to the American and Canadian Lithuanians for materializing a dream.

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LAND OF THE BURNING CROSS

While we were in Canada the scandalous events of Little Rock, Arkansas, whose inane behavior was by no means a little rock, but a big shock to the world and American prestige, occupied the blackest and largest headlines in the Canadian press and radio. Much ado was made over it. The cruelest pictures of cowed and frightened Negro children bullied by heap big brave whites, the kicking of a minister in the chest, showing him doubled over in pain, of whites hurling bricks at helpless people, prompted the Canadians to call these people "savages", a name they truly deserve. It was a replica of Nazi Germany, where the same treatment was perpetrated upon the Jews. Those white skinned and black hearted trash shamed America in front of the whole world, they also shamed Christianity, the religion of love for one another. That Billy Graham, instead of traveling the world over and living off the fat of the land and enjoying undeserved adulation, let him go to those godless bigots and preach to them the word of God that they may at least know what the commandment of Christ meant: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Or "Do unto others what you would want others do unto you." Instead, the only translation for "love" to those savages is "fornication" but goodness of heart their black hearts within a white body, knows none. God's love is endless and He is long to anger, but when He does may God grant that their children will some day suffer the indignities of "do unto them as they did unto others." I fear that the Christian "men of God", especially the Protestant ones, have failed Christianity, failed God and failed Christ and whole Christian set up, as it is practiced now, is a shameful farce. Indeed, the Romans crucified Christ but once, but our bigotted Christians are crucifying him every second of the day, and every time they burn a cross in front of a Negro home they are also burning Christ on it.

It is interesting to note that these disgracers of the American nation are the ones who brag about their being "true, old stock" Americans; that is, their ancestors came to these shores before 1848. They claim "English" extraction and of being Protestants. They are mostly Baptists or fundamentalists of some hue, factions which exist by keeping alive some obscure or insignificant biblical passage in order to keep the people divided against each other. Their preachers overlook the main point of Christianity. Their bibles probably do not contain the Sermon of the Mount nor Christ's last commandment. In fact they fear God less than the loss of the dirty (pardon slip, thirty) shekels. Hence, a "prayer" meeting was called not for the sake to enlighten their error ridden flock but for the perpetuation of discrimination and differences. Do these preachers think that God, the heavenly Father of all human beings will grant the fulfillment of such a prayer? Poor souls!

As for the Negro, and as far as that goes, any Asian, African, pure American (Indian & Mexican) or any non-Aryan (but especially the Negro since he is mostly a Baptist), would do better if they discarded that God whose beard is held firmly by those Baptists. For he is a tribal God and not a universal one. He belongs to the Fundamentalists, others can only worship Him from back rows and segregated galleries. Therefore, those who love statuary and ritual let then accept Buddhism, those who do not go for it can accept Islam while those who seek only an ethical way of life can become Confucianists. The above religions have only ONE UNIVERSAL GOD who is the Father of all, regardless of color and no super race has any monopoly over him.

With such "men of God" keeping differences alive it is no wonder that we have people of bigotry and bias, people who pride themselves in traditions that have been not only outmoded centuries ago but discredited. Traditions about which we read with horror in the histories of the dark ages are still alive in the United States. If the Negro doesn't wear any "patch of shame" over his clothes, as did the Jews, it is because the color identifies him. This land of color television and other "high standard civilization" practices boldly and proudly dissabilities and oppressions upon a minority that horrifies the world: Negroes are not allowed to be called by a title (Mr. or Mrs.), Negroes may not enter through a front door, they may not eat in the same restaurant, they may not drink from the same water fountain, they may not purchase ice cream through the same hole-in-the-wall, they may not defend themselves! It is the fear lest the privilege of lynching Negroes, dynamiting their homes, castrating their men will be denied to them that the cry about "States Rights" is raised sky high. As it stands now it is a land of a double standard justice and a land of terror even for the non-colored one if he speaks out against the abuses perpetrated by those "old stock Americans". One never knows when his life will be threatened, when his property will be damaged, or when the cross, which has become a symbol of hate, bigotry and infamy, will burn in front of some victim's home. The Great White Father in Washington or any of the other little fathers in the Congress or Senate seem to find no need to stop such practices which should be condemned, whether they happen in Levittown, Detroit, Norfolk or Birmingham.

Recently an important official arrived from Ghana. In his home Vice president Nixon was welcomed and entertained, but when he came to this country the eating dives considered themselves too good to permit that person to eat at their tables. In Louisiana where recently a convention of international educators was held, a Negro educator was not allowed to participate and no one heard a word of protest from other white fellow Americans. Decency and education do not go hand in hand in this country, so it seems. It is such acts which creates animosity against the American the world over. The millions spent educating the aboriginies of Timbuktu and the Assam Hills is wasted. It would be of greater service to our country if our local savages would receive the funds to educate them in humanes, true Christianity and true Americanism. That also goes for all of their vociferous representatives who see to it that hatreds and the "better than thou" attitude remains and obtains a governmental approval. Since "Evil begets evil" this land will continue in evil as long as even one person is oppressed because of his color.

Those who have television sets beheld for themselves the bestiality of the "super-race". Nine Negro children (and one walked alone in the Carolinas) walked with a dignity as is becoming a martyr race, on a long via dolorosa as did Christ two thousand years ago, amid a long line of a jeering, foul mouthed mob shouting obscenities with all the ugliness of their black soul portrayed on their white physiognomies. Those who witnessed it wept with shame for the doomed white race.

I, too, weep for thee, my beloved land,
Because of them who shame thee before all nations,
Because of them who dim the torch in the hand of Our
Lady of Freedom,
Because of them who mock at their crucified Christ!